



Gaslight News

The Historical Society of Riverton
Riverton, New Jersey

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Incorporated 1978

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U.S.S. New Jersey Program at December Meeting

Join the members of the Historical Society of Riverton on Monday December 1st at 7:30 pm for a program at the Riverton School on the USS New Jersey. The USS New Jersey (BB62) is the most decorated battleship in the history of the United States Navy. An Iowa-class battleship the 'New Jersey' had a crew of 117 officers and 1,804 enlisted personnel as she sailed into hostile waters in both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans over her five-decade career.



Norm Roton from the *Home Port Alliance* will present a slide show and talk on the history of the Battleship USS New Jersey and the public education programs available for students and adults aboard ship in the Camden waterfront. Norm is a Cinnaminson resident who served in the Navy during the Korean conflict on board the Destroyer USS Benham (DD796) out of Newport Rhode Island. He will be joined by Bob Walters, the curator of the museum, who will outline the history of the ship from her launch on December 7th, 1942 in Philadelphia to her series of commissions beginning in 1943 for World War II, the Korean and Vietnam Conflicts (1950-68), and duty in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Lebanon in 1984.

Known by her crew as 'Big J' the Battleship New Jersey was decommissioned for the last time at the Naval Station Long Beach, California, in 1991 and towed to the city of Bremerton in Washington State. On September 12, 1999, 'New Jersey' was towed by the tug *Sea Victory* from Bremerton through the Panama Canal to Philadelphia on November 11th the same year. Two months later, the Secretary of the United States Navy, Richard Danzig, authorized the donation of the 'New Jersey' to the Home Port Alliance of Camden, N.J., for use as a museum.

For more information on programs and events contact the *Home Port Alliance* at 856-966-1652. <http://www.battleshipnewjersey.org>

Photo credit for the BB62 at sea provided
courtesy of the Naval Historical Center,
Navy Office of Information, Washington, D.C.

Please contact our Program Chair, John Farr, with your ideas or recommendations for future programs and presenters.

E-mail: rivertonhistory@usa.com

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Membership Dues Reminder

Gaslight News

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of Riverton, and is published four times a year.



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A Riverton Victorian Christmas

December 6th
New Leaf Gift Shop

2003
Candlelight House Tour

Display sponsored by the
*Historical Society of
Riverton*

A benefit for the
Riverton Free Library

Victorian Items Needed for Display

The Display Committee of the HSR is busy preparing a Victorian Parlor for the Riverton Library's upcoming Candlelight House Tour. HSR member Phyllis Rodgers has generously offered the HSR use of the small "cottage" located behind the *New Leaf Gift Shop* building.

Several members have already donated items to be used for the display on Saturday, December 6 from 5-10PM. The Display Committee will appreciate any Victorian Christmas or parlor items that could be used for the one-night display. All items will be carefully displayed and returned promptly to their owner the week after the Candlelight House Tour.

We are especially looking for period framed photos, pictures, and prints. Does anyone have any toy soldiers or an old drum to place under our Christmas tree? How about an old stool or bench for a pianoforte or parlor organ? An embroidery or needlepoint hoop stand? A stereoscopic viewer?

Please call Priscilla Taylor at 856-786-3555 if you have any items to loan. Tickets for the Candlelight House Tour are available for purchase at the Riverton Library and the New Leaf. Proceeds benefit the Library. Please support the Library, and your Historical Society, by visiting our beautiful *Riverton Victorian Christmas* display.



Meeting Schedule 2003-04

The *Historical Society of Riverton* meets on five Monday evenings at the Riverton School 7:30 pm in the Media Center.

December 1, 2003

January 26th, 2004

March 8th, 2004

May 10th, 2004



Membership News

The Historical Society welcomes new members:
Eric & Jody Goldstein and Robert Hoag.

The deadline for 2004 *HSR Membership Dues* was **November 1**. If you haven't yet done so, please send your payment to:

Priscilla Taylor, Membership Chair
105 Seventh Street, Riverton, 08077

or bring your dues to the December 1st meeting.

Then and Now...

Godey's Lady's Book:

A Riverton Connection

By the late 1850's, Riverton was becoming established as a popular destination for summer vacations.

Numerous boarding houses advertised for summer guests and touted our river location as a beneficial and "healthful" outing, offering respite from Philadelphia's pollution and intense summer heat.



One avid summer resident was Louis Antoine Godey (1804-1878). He was the publisher of the popular women's magazine, *Godey's Lady's Book*, which evolved to represent the Victorian lifestyle.

Godey was born in New York City to respectable French parents of no great means. He was self-educated and had a intense penchant for literature. This led to ownership of a combined bookshop and newsstand in New York City.

Godey had big dreams for himself, and grew disenchanted with New York. He set his sights on Philadelphia, which was then known as the Publishing Capitol of the United States.

In Philadelphia, Godey worked in the newspaper business for several years, both in the composing room and business departments. He soon became proficient in the business of publishing as well as marketing.

In July 1830, Godey ventured on his own at twenty-six years of age and published the first issue of the "*Lady's Book*." The publication became America's leading magazine for women and earned a readership of over 150,000 at the height of its popularity. Godey always referred to his magazine as "The Book," and proclaimed "Our Book is the mirror of woman's mind!"

Few 19th century women could be without the monthly *Godey's Lady's Book*, and those women who could not afford the annual \$3.00 subscription fee formed Clubs with other women so they might receive the issues at a reduced rate.

According to author Robert Kunciov of *Mr. Godey's Ladies – a Mosaic of Fashion and Fancies*, the *Book* "...was a source of the last word in fashion, a compendium of practical advice, an anthology of stories and poems, a gallery of fashion plates and art engravings, a platform of causes *celebre* and *pas de celebre* for the unliberated woman, a mirror of grace and a minor social history."

Godey offered his *Book* as a monthly staple for the education and entertainment of his female readers. Each month, with a Barnum-like flair, he would promise at least one hand-colored engraved fashion plate and at least four elaborately detailed steel engravings whose illustrations rivaled any publication. At the approach of every New Year, Godey would promise his faithful readers "a new feature of beauty, a more attractive novelty, a higher grade of excellence."

As a result, *Godey's Lady's Book* reigned supreme as the premier women's magazine for at least sixty-eight years. Godey managed the entire operation of the magazine, conducted its extensive correspondence, and hired authors and artists. He also penned the *Book's* "*Godey's Arm Chair*" column, through which he dispensed advice and admonishments to his readers, and selected tidbits of information from around the world as news "briefs."

One "Godey's Arm Chair" example from the November 1873 issue stated "There was an excellent crop of mosquitoes at Cape May at the close of the bathing season. They came almost too late to be relished by the sojourners at that place." Another Godey tidbit warned women about the use of rouge to color their cheeks. "Take Notice – an eminent physician has lately published a circular warning women against the use of rouge. He states, and cites cases innumerable, that it produces premature failing of the eyesight."

In the beginning years of *Godey's Lady's Book*, Godey relied solely on English sources for the magazine's literature pages. However, he felt the ambition to give his *Book* a distinctly American feature. From 1836 on, after hiring Mrs. Sarah Josepha Hale as Editor of his "Book," Godey handsomely paid American writers for their articles and poetry. Mrs. Sarah Josepha Hale was also known as the woman who persuaded President Abraham Lincoln to make the fourth Thursday in November an official Thanksgiving Day.

Continued on page four

Godey was the first American publisher to offer "liberal" payment to American authors. Contributors to *Godey's Lady's Book* included celebrated writers such as Irving, Longfellow, Emerson, Bryant, Louisa May Alcott, Catherine Beecher, and Edgar Allen Poe. In fact, a Poe biographer stated that Poe contributed so often to the *Book* that the publication must solely be responsible for his livelihood.

Although we cannot be sure of how Louis Godey came to make Riverton his summer home, we do know that his publishing office was located on Chestnut Street in Philadelphia -- just around the corner from the Market Street businesses of several of Riverton's founding families. One reliable advertiser in the *Lady's Book* was none other than the Henry A. Dreer Company, another firm with Riverton connections.

His *Lady's Book* editor, Mrs. Sarah Josepha Hale, described Louis Godey as "high-minded, generous, liberal-hearted, to sincere; a fast friend, and a good citizen."

According to Riverton historian, Betty Hahle, Godey was a generous and appreciated benefactor to the Christ Episcopal Church in Riverton. After his death in 1874, Godey's son and daughter commissioned the Tiffany Company to produce a stained glass window for the new church built at the corner of 4th & Main Streets. The church's architect, John Frazier, helped design the window known as "The Rose". The Tiffany window is visible from Main Street. The window was dedicated in memory of Louis Antoine Godey.

In the November 1873 issue of *Godey's Lady's Book*, a "writer" named Florence Fashionhunter penned a feature article, "Rambles About the City." The author's "voice" is so similar to Godey's in his "Armchair" columns, that one wonders if Mr. Godey used pseudonyms as Benjamin Franklin did to further his opinions in his publications. "Rambles About the City" begins:

"Come, reader, we will take a walk. Not that bonnet, if you please, my dear madam; that is a very pretty little affair -- for some other occasion; but now you must don your most recherché chapeau, assume a thrilling mantle, 'sport' your moiré antique dress, draw on immaculate gaiter-boots and kid-gloves, raise a most fashionable parasol, and now, if you are as charmingly arrayed as your wardrobe will permit, we will start. Allons! Presto! Pass! We are on the Broadway of Philadelphia, Chestnut Street; where fashion, folly, pleasure, and business reign in turn, and the beaux and belles display the latest fashions, smallest bonnets, and largest moustaches, and 'kill time' by promenading from Fourth to Tenth Street...."

So, dear *Gaslight News* reader, I hope that your rambles along our tranquil Riverton riverbank may be as delightfully pursued as those of the women and men of Victorian yesteryear. We can be assured that Louis Antoine Godey enjoyed many pleasant strolls along our Bank Avenue.

Please visit the HSR website in December to view some of the detailed engravings from the November 1873 issue of *Godey's Lady's Book*.

<http://www.gaslightnews.homestead.com>

Contributed by Priscilla Taylor, Riverton, New Jersey. Priscilla is a HSR board member, chair of the Membership Committee. She is active on HSR committees for the Antique Appraisal Fair and the Candlelight House Tour featuring "A Riverton Victorian Christmas" display. She holds a Masters degree in Elementary Education and teaches gifted students grades 2-6 in Audubon, New Jersey. Priscilla is a frequent contributor to the Gaslight News.

Guidelines for Contributors

The Gaslight News

welcomes contributions in the form of announcements, articles, oral and family histories, and letters describing historic events or daily life. Subject matter shall be consistent with the purpose of the Historical Society of Riverton:

"...to bring together those people who are interested in history and especially in the history of the Borough of Riverton, but not limited thereto."

- Priority for publication are those subjects related to Riverton, Burlington County and the Delaware River communities.
- Other subjects or events considered for publication include New Jersey, regional, and national history.
- Send announcements or articles to the editor by e-mail using MS-Word, WordPad, WP or Notepad. B&W photos as .jpg files.

Rivertonhistory@usa.com

- Handwritten copies accepted.
- Article length limited to 1200 words.
- Images and artwork must have re-print permission with credits.